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THE TRIPARTITE DIVISION OF EDUCATION

THE tripartite division of education is of ancient date and wide currency. It is found in the writings of Plato and Aristotle, and was practically carried out in the schools of both Athens and Rome. Comenius, who was perhaps the first modern writer to work out an articulated systems of schools, made four divisions, including the school of infancy or the mother's lap;¹ and since his time the threefold scheme, not now counting the school of infancy, has become established in all progressive countries. These facts point to the conclusion that the tripartite scheme has at least been found convenient; and also raise the question of the basis on which it rests. Of course the divisions actually worked out in different times and places differ widely in themselves.

It is a common remark that the historical development of education has been from the top downwards, and not from the bottom upwards. The university, which originated in mediæval times, is the oldest existing type of Christian school. Now Latin was the vernacular of the universities for several centuries,

¹ See Professor S. S. Laurie's *John Amos Comenius*, p. 131. This is the complete scheme :

"1. Infancy :— the mother's lap up to six years of age.

"2. Boyhood :—*ludus literarius* or vernacular public school.

"3. Adolescence :—the Latin school or gymnasium.

"4. Youth :— the University (*Academia*) and travel."

the student's preparation for entrance being such command of the language as enabled him to take the lectures appropriate to his rank and to carry on the commerce of university life. This preparation was obtained in grammar schools, which were often, but not always, found in connection with the cathedrals or collegiate churches, and which appear to have been an outgrowth of the monastic and episcopal schools of an earlier time. While the instruction given in these schools was graduated to the needs of the scholars, it does not appear to have been divided into primary and secondary stages.¹

The modern elementary school was slow in appearing, and for a very good reason. Experience proves, what might indeed have been seen beforehand, that elementary schools, as we understand them, could be developed only on the basis of a vernacular culture. In no country can the multitude be brought up on a foreign language. Even the three national languages of Switzerland are vernacular to those who use them, not exotic tongues. Comenius very significantly called his common school "the vernacular school." But the old grammar schools were Latin schools. As a body, the humanists took little interest in popular education, and the Jesuits have been often censured for confining themselves almost wholly to secondary education, thus passing the masses by. The fact is that the humanists and classicists of early times had no ideals, no education-material, and no ped-

¹ It may be stated with some confidence that at least in the later Middle Age the smallest towns and even the larger villages possessed schools where a boy might learn to read and acquire the first rudiments of ecclesiastical Latin; while, except in very remote and thinly populated regions, he would never have had to go very far from home to find a regular grammar school. That the means of education in reading, writing, and the elements of Latin were far more widely diffused in mediæval times than has sometimes been supposed, is coming to be generally recognized by students of mediæval life. The knowledge of reading and writing and of the elements of Latin was by no means confined to the clergy: "The bailiff of every manor kept his accounts in Latin." A grammar master often formed part of the establishment of a great noble or prelate, who had pages of gentle family residing in his house for education. In other cases a boy of well-to-do family no doubt received his earliest education from a chaplain or "clerk" of his father, or from a private tutor or neighboring priest engaged for the purpose.—Rashdall, *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*, p. 602.

agogical methods with which they could reach the common people, and so they were necessarily excluded from the field of elementary education. Even Luther, who did so much to promote popular education, both by its direct inculcation and by translating the Bible into the vernacular of his country, thus furnishing education-material, insisted on putting Latin, Greek, and Hebrew in the schools before German. The fact is, there was no possibility of making education national and popular, or of building up a system of elementary schools, until the hold of the classics had been partially broken; but just as soon as men in large numbers came to value vernacular culture, the modern elementary school gained a foothold, which has become firmer and stronger from that day to this.

But our subject is, the basis on which the tripartite division of education rests. Is it to be sought in convention merely? Is the educational course like a railway connecting Chicago and New York, which is cut up into divisions merely for convenience in management? When you say that A, B, and C are severally receiving a primary, a secondary, and a higher education, do you mean merely that they have reached different stages on a road that has the same prevailing character throughout? Again, does the division rest on the need of society for a hierarchy of equipped workers,—the need of men and women of different degrees of education? Do we mean only that the primary school is for the many, the secondary school for the few, the college or university for the very few? Or, finally, are we consulting the necessities of those who practice the teaching art? While something can be said for each of these views, they are all superficial. They can be answered in their own terms; but it will be better to answer them by including them in a profounder view of the subject.

The thesis that I propose is this: The tripartite division of education, and so of schools, is based on fact and reason; or, more definitely, it rests on the nature of the education that is furnished, or that should be furnished, in elementary, secondary, and higher schools.

A short departure from the direct line of thought may here be excused. The existing school systems of even the best educated countries, to a degree, rest on tradition and convenience. In the gymnasia of Germany, the colleges and lycées of France, and the endowed schools of England, as well as in the high schools and academies of the United States, there is considerable elementary teaching. The German, French, and English schools referred to take their pupils at from nine to twelve years of age. Possibly, also, higher instruction may sometimes be found in these so-called secondary schools. The main point is this: Elementary work does not become secondary, or secondary work higher work, because it is done in a so-called high school or college. For, if the tripartite division of schools rests on fact and reason, then the work done, or the teaching, must give character to the school, and not the school to the teaching. From this point of view it is easy to define the three kinds of schools: Elementary, secondary, and higher schools are schools in which the teaching, or instruction, that gives them their real character is elementary, secondary, or higher instruction, as the case may be. The school is defined, as other things are defined, from its prevailing or characteristic features.

We must remember also that the child's education begins in the school of infancy, and not in the elementary school. Here the child acquires the elements of all knowledge, or at least of all kinds of knowledge. In contact with the natural world, human society, and his own mind he finds the keys to universal instruction. In the school of infancy, too, are found the rudiments of all language culture. Here the child acquires a store of language, as well as a store of facts and ideas. The great Slavonic Reformer contended that in the school of the lap the elements of everything necessary to the building up of the life of man may be obtained.

These things premised, let us return to our question: What are the characteristic marks or notes of the three great divisions of education respectively? We shall find them partly in the things that are taught and partly in the methods of teaching

them ; or, to put it in another form, in the kind and degree of mental exercise and growth that are produced. In other words, the tripartite division of education rests upon three groups of psychological facts.

The elementary school is plainly marked off from the school of infancy, on the one hand, and sufficiently so from the secondary school on the other. Here the child finds the elementary school arts,—speech, reading, writing, drawing, composition, the elements of arithmetic, and the like. These are arts, not sciences ; tools for carrying on study, not studies ; means, not ends. While they add something in themselves to real knowledge and discipline, the great reason for teaching them is the necessity of equipping the mind for future work. These arts give the elementary school its primary character. In the elementary school, also, we meet the elementary studies proper,—language, literature, history including civil government, mathematics, and science. It is important that the studies of the elementary school shall include all the great divisions of knowledge. Here again the idea of equipment is found ; the pupil is to be furnished with knowledge that will be useful for guidance in life or for information, and also be trained in methods or habits of acquisition, so that he can go farther on the same road, whether in the secondary school or in the school of self-cultivation. As Comenius put it, our duty is to instruct all human beings in all those things that have to do with human affairs. He mentions the moralities, and says mutual serviceableness should be promoted and the disposition to over self-appraisement be suppressed, or, in the words of Professor Laurie : “ The vernacular school ought to teach all that would be of use for the whole of life, and this to all.” So much for subjects ; now a few words in relation to method. Method is as characteristic of elementary teaching as subject-matter itself. Nor is elementary method, or the method of elementary teaching, difficult of discovery. Do what we will to develop the higher intelligence of children, elementary education will always bear the plain stamp of memory and so of empiricism : the child cannot as yet deal with great logical constructions, or

trace out with care the relations and interdependencies of things. Besides, as has been shown, a store of material, to be used both for itself and as apperceiving centers, must be laid in. Still, elementary school work should not concern itself wholly with the memory, or be altogether empirical. On the contrary, it should, as far as can be consistently done at this stage of progress, energize all the powers of the mind. It is a period when perception, memory, and imagination are particularly active. Such an education as has now been described will qualify the pupil to take his own place in society, and to do intelligently the common work of the world.

So far there will be no difference of opinion. The next step may lead to disagreement. The foreign languages are arts, quite as much as the vernacular tongue, because they are the keys to their respective literatures. What is more, the memorizing of words and forms of words belonging to a foreign tongue, and the translation of simple sentences, are as much elementary work as the similar processes in the vernacular. Furthermore, while algebra and geometry are counted secondary studies, the algebraic notation and simple constructive geometry are purely elementary.

The secondary school marks a stride forward in two main particulars. (1) Although the student will long continue to become more skillful in their use, we may now consider that the arts of the elementary school are mastered. He has been put in possession of the tools of the student's trade. The same may be said of the elements of foreign languages, if they are taught in the elementary school. (2) The range of real study is greatly increased: old studies are followed farther and new ones are taken up. The fields of literature, history, and politics are more fully cultivated, mathematics is pushed on to the algebraic and geometrical stages, while several of the sciences of nature are pursued a certain distance. The study of grammar and rhetoric give an introspective view of the mind itself. While the secondary course is somewhat encyclopædic, still its note is discipline, or development, rather than the attainment of any

particular kind of knowledge. Properly speaking there is no specialization. To look at the subject from the side of the mind, or the faculties, memory is less prominent than in the elementary school, the thinking faculties more prominent. Accordingly there is less empiricism and more thought. It is a stage of limited generalization. The secondary school deals with the relations existing within groups of facts, rather than the relations that bind groups together; the time for philosophy has not yet come. The geography, history, and elements of science taught in the school below have been called "fact lore;" the corresponding studies of the secondary school, more developed, should be real sciences.

Higher instruction is not concerned with school arts, but is wholly occupied with real subjects of study. It develops the powers of the mind, but its note is knowledge rather than discipline. The assumption is that the student has been set on his feet, and that he is now able to get on somewhat rapidly and independently. The higher schools are the place for specialization, so far as specialization is conformable to general culture. The tools of acquisition have been put into the student's hands, and he is now expected to use them. Text-books and lectures are still prominent, but room is also made for research. The library and the laboratory assume a new prominence in the life of the student. The knowledge *that*, as the Greeks called it, is still valued, but less highly than the knowledge *why*. The student searches for things and for the unity that is in things. It is the period of surveys, views, explanations, generalizations, and laws. The student is introduced to philosophy.

Perhaps it will be said that this is only an ideal construction—that a scheme closely following the lines drawn does not exist in any country. The following observations may therefore be submitted:

1. The three divisions of education are not wholly discontinuous, like the compartments of a ship; they pass into one

another, as in all cases of organic growth; still each division has its own distinguishing marks. At the same time there is good reason to think that the transitions are made too suddenly from one class of schools to the next higher one. Particularly is this true of the passage from the elementary to the secondary school. As a rule this is the case in respect both to studies and methods, and the fact accounts in a measure for the large shrinkage of the number of high school pupils in passing from the first year to the second one. Many pupils are not able to bear the strain that new studies and new methods impose. It would be far better if the change began to come as early as the seventh grade. In that way time would be saved, and the rigor of the later sudden transition would be mitigated. Comenius proposed that the child should pass out of the vernacular school at the age of twelve years.

2. While it may be true that no existing scheme of education closely follows the lines laid down, all modern schemes conform to it in a general way. Such divergences as exist do not disprove the practical reality of the division, or show that it is useless.

3. A division of education is one thing, an organized system of schools quite another. Even in countries where general ideas most prevail, as Germany and France, the school organization, as has been stated, rests partly on tradition and convenience, and not wholly on pedagogical principles. Neither will it be found practical, perhaps, to make a school system conform strictly to pedagogical principles. But the fact that some secondary work must be done in the elementary school, or some elementary work in the secondary school, is no reason for not sharply discriminating the several kinds of education or teaching.

4. We must not be led to deny the reality of the tripartite division because the names of schools do not always correspond

to the work that is done in them. Elementary teaching is often found in secondary schools, secondary teaching in both elementary and higher schools. The character of the work done in any case must be determined by an examination of the work itself, and not by looking at the name of the school as printed in the catalogue. An institution is not, pedagogically speaking, a university because it happens to bear that name.

5. The secondary school may be so called whether we view it from above or below. Originally it was much more difficult to adjust it to the school below than the school above, but at the present time the fact is the other way.

6. Holding tenaciously that the tripartite division is founded in fact and reason, and not in mere convenience, we may still conceive an intelligent difference of opinion on the question where dividing lines should be drawn. Nor is there any reason why different adjustments of studies may not be made at different times, but quite the contrary. In truth, outside the school arts the question is not so much the name that the study bears as the work that is done under the name. While it is plain that the algebraic notation and simple constructive geometry are elementary work, it is equally plain that some of the arithmetic found in the elementary text-books is secondary work. Literature and history present every one of the three stages of study, and so do many of the sciences.

7. There is now considerable interest felt in the optional introduction of so-called high school studies into the grades below. Latin and German have already been subjected to this experiment in some schools. Interest in this experiment is likely to grow. As has been shown, the first stage of these languages is purely elementary work. Furthermore, it is desirable for pedagogical reasons to begin foreign languages at an earlier day than is commonly done. It is well known that Latin is begun much earlier in Germany, France, and England than in the

United States. Why should we not profit by the example of those countries? No doubt there are difficulties growing out of the peculiar organization of the public schools, as well as difficulties inherent in the nature of society. It is more difficult to forecast the future of an American child than it is the future of a European child. Still, the administrative difficulties can in a degree be overcome, while the number of American children whose future can be forecasted with a reasonable degree of confidence is sufficiently large to warrant the experiment that is now being made.

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